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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7887
INFO RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 6033
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0638
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7306
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0718
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 1220
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1782
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SCJS SEOUL KOR

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2015
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [AMGT](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: LOCAL UNHCR REQUESTS STOP TO NORTH KOREAN ASYLUM
SEEKERS REFERRALS

REF: A. STATE 25824
[1](#)B. 05 STATE 174716

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Action Request: See paragraph 3.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On May 12, the Acting Representative of UNHCR in the Republic of Korea, Michele Manca di Nissa, informed poloff that over the past week 3-5 ROK citizens, apparently resettled from North Korea, had approached UNHCR requesting asylum in the United States claiming that they suffered from oppression in South Korea. They also claimed that they were referred to UNHCR by the Embassy. Manca di Nissa said he was calling Canadian, U.S., and New Zealand Embassies to request that they desist from referring South Korean citizens to UNHCR because its mandate did not extend to the ROK, adding that "there was nothing UNHCR could do" for South Korean citizens in the ROK seeking asylum elsewhere. In light of media accounts of the USG having accepted North Koreans via Southeast Asia and a Los Angeles court granting protection to a former North Korean who had obtained ROK citizenship, he was concerned the number of North Koreans living in South Korea but seeking asylum elsewhere would increase.

[1](#)3. (S) While we do not know the particulars of the recent incidents mentioned by UNHCR, Embassy procedure, per reftels, has been to refer walk-ins seeking asylum or refugee status to UNHCR. Embassy requests clarification whether we should continue to refer such cases to UNHCR.

MINTON